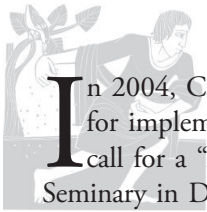


Forming Priests for the New Evangelization: One Seminary's Response

Ralph Martin, STD



In 2004, Cardinal Adam Maida articulated a vision for implementing a response to Pope John Paul II's call for a "new evangelization" at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in Detroit. Working with then Auxiliary Bishop Allen Vigneron (currently Archbishop of Detroit) and Rector/President Father Steven Boguslawski, OP (until recently President of the Dominican House of Studies in Washington, DC), the seminary determined that offering a Pontifical Licentiate (STL) with a focus on the New Evangelization would be of great help to the church. In addition, they determined that there should be a new motto for the seminary: Preparing Heralds for the New Evangelization. It was their intention that all of the degree programs offered by the seminary and school of theology include the opportunity to take courses and undertake *practica* with a focus on evangelization. Fortunately, we had a sufficient number of faculty with both pontifical degrees and actual evangelization experience to create a credible program.

Working with the appropriate Roman Congregations and the Pontifical University of St. Thomas (the Angelicum), we eventually received permission to grant this pontifical degree in pastoral theology with a focus on the New Evangelization. Recently, we received permission to offer an online/summer program version of the STL in addition to our residential program.

There was a strong international interest in Sacred Heart's STL program from the very beginning. Since the program began, we have admitted sixty-five students from thirteen different countries. The most strongly represented countries outside of the United States include Ghana,

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India, Canada and Nigeria. We currently have nineteen students enrolled and, after successfully completing their degree program requirements, twenty-one have graduated. These first graduates include sixteen priests, one permanent deacon and four laypeople. Five of our graduates are currently enrolled in doctorate programs.

We have worked over a number of years to make the preparation of Heralds of the New Evangelization more than just a motto, but an actual reflection of what our students are exposed to in all our degree programs. At the beginning of the 2013/2014 school year, we had about 120 seminarians in both our college and graduate theology programs and about 400 lay students and Deacon candidates in a variety of other programs. Our Masters of Divinity (M.Div.) students are now required to take a three-credit course in Theology of the New Evangelization and another three-credit course in Spirituality of the New Evangelization. They also

have room in their schedule to take another three-credit elective in Models of Evangelization or Cultural Milieu of the New Evangelization.

In the Theology of the New Evangelization course, we cover the foundations of the renewed emphasis of evangelization in the church in Vatican II and examine the post-conciliar documents related to it. We closely examine the content of the *kerygma* and discuss how to present it in today's culture. We also examine theological schemas that tend to undermine evangelization and discuss how confusion about whether evangelization is "necessary or nice" can be cleared up.

In the Spirituality of Evangelization course, we study in depth the work of the Holy Spirit in both the contemplative and charismatic dimensions of his actions. We consider the need for a "new Pentecost" for the effectiveness of the new evangelization in response to the recent pope's calls for such a new Pentecost. We examine the theology and pastoral wisdom available for helping realize a new Pentecost. We also explore the depth of holiness and union with God that is the foundation for spiritual fruitfulness. Normally taught by one of our biblical scholars, the course intensively reviews the lessons to be learned from the Acts of the Apostles for the challenges of today. Additionally, we offer students the opportunity to participate in the "lab" portion of this course by attending periodic meetings held by "The Fellowship of St. Paul," a group of students and faculty who offer further teaching and practical experience on recognizing and experiencing the work of the Spirit and his charisms.

In the Models of Evangelization class, we study examples of evangelization throughout the church's history, encompassing a study of the monastic movement including: St. Anthony of the Desert, St. Benedict, the work of St. Patrick in Ireland, St. Boniface in Germany, St. Vincent Ferrer in medieval Europe, St. Francis de Sales' works of apologetics in Calvinist France and other contemporary models being successfully utilized in many parts of the church today. As much as possible, actual practitioners of these contemporary models are present in class and available for interaction with students.

In the Cultural Milieu of the New Evangelization course, we examine the philosophical presuppositions of the culture in which we must now evangelize. In addition, we discuss strategies for responding to these presuppositions.

If they wish, our Masters of Arts and Masters of Arts in Pastoral Studies students are given the

opportunity to do a concentration in the New Evangelization. Our STL and other degree students who choose the New Evangelization concentration are also required to do a two-credit *practica*. The *practica* involves hands-on experience with actual evangelization work and extensive reflection on the theology, spirituality and methodology inherent in that particular work. In their Homiletics classes, M.Div. students are taught how to clearly proclaim the basic Gospel message as well as give personal testimony to their own faith in Christ and the church. We teach students to give their testimonies in a way that will be intelligible to nonbelievers and fallen away Catholics. Students learn how to avoid using "in-house jargon" because even the baptized increasingly do not understand it. Students are also taught how to lovingly, yet in an uncompromising way, discuss those challenging aspects of the Gospel to which our culture is most resistant. In their apostolic formation, students are also exposed to direct evangelization as a complement to their clinical, social justice and catechetical experience.

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Our residential STL program normally takes two full years to successfully complete the required credit hours, the thesis and the *Lectio coram*. We have discovered that many who are interested in obtaining our STL degree have bishops or job situations that will not allow so long an absence. Our current Rector/President, Monsignor Todd Lajiness, recently announced that the Congregation for Catholic Education and the *Angelicum* have given permission for us to offer the

STL in a way that will not require the full two-year residency. In the summer of 2014 we hosted our first cohort of non-residential STL students for their first of 4 five week summer sessions, a group of 12 priests from all over the country and Sudan and India as well, and we got rave reviews for the experience of spiritual renewal, community life, and the courses taught. These same priests are now taking their first on-line course back in their pastoral assignments. Our website (www.shms.edu) contains details about this new option.

Sacred Heart Major Seminary's response to the church's call to a New Evangelization is a work in progress, but a work we are happy to have begun and from which we are already seeing fruit for the kingdom. We share this in the hope that it will be of interest to other seminaries that are also seeking to respond to the call to the New Evangelization. We look forward to learning from others about what they are doing.

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Ralph Martin, STD, is Associate Professor and the Director of Graduate Theology Programs in the New Evangelization at Sacred Heart Major Seminary in the Archdiocese of Detroit. He is also a Consultor to the Pontifical Council for the New Evangelization and was named to assist at the Synod of Bishops on the New Evangelization held in October, 2012.

The *Digital Dante* Competition

Who can declare the mighty acts of the Lord, or show forth all his praise? —(Ps. 106:2)

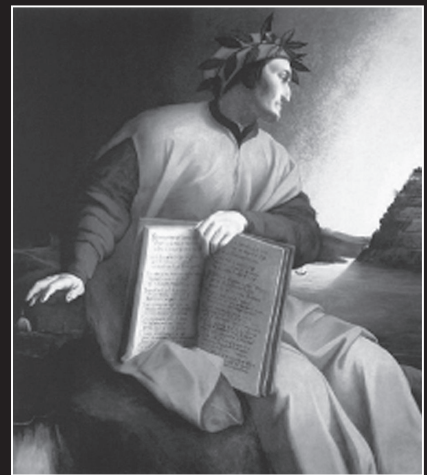
The *Divine Comedy*, the masterpiece of Dante Alighieri, contains images that impressively describe the pilgrim's arduous ascent from the darkness of sin to the light of glory in the presence of God. These images are vivid expressions of the profound salvific truths which, as Catholic teaching demonstrates, must be *experienced and lived*, and not simply *learned*.

The year 2014 marks the 700th anniversary of the publication of Dante's *Inferno*, and to celebrate this septucentennial, the Catholic Distance Learning Network is hosting a contest for the best digitally-produced rendition of any aspect of Dante's *Divine Comedy*.

This contest will be an annual event through the year 2021, which marks the 700th anniversary of the completion of the *Paradiso* and also of the death of Dante Alighieri.

The winning submission each year will provide an accurate rendering of Dante's intent concerning the aspect of his poem that is being pursued, employing the latest digital photographic, animation and sound technology.

See <http://www.digitaldante.org> for details.



Allegorical portrait of Dante by Agnolo Bronzino, c. 1530